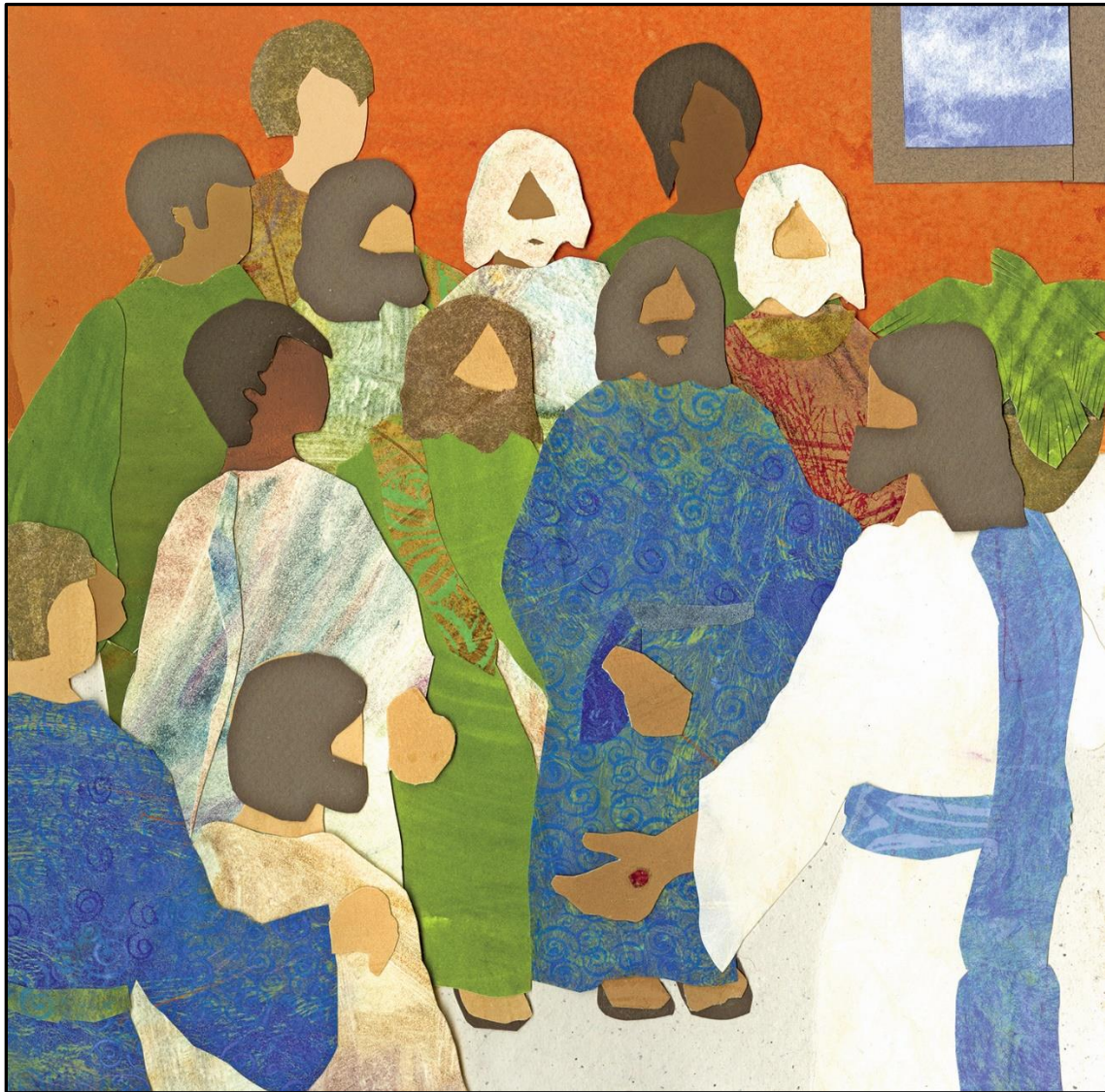


**First Congregational
United Church of Christ
River Falls, Wisconsin**

April 27, 2025



Earth Day

**FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
RIVER FALLS, WISCONSIN**

April 27, 2025

Second Sunday of Easter and Earth Day

10:00 am

Gathering

I don't have to change the world all by myself, I just need
to partner in the work God wants us to do.

- Katharine Hayhoe

Welcome to our guests who are visiting with
us today!

- Activity bags are available for children.
- Large print bulletins are available from the ushers.
- Please stand when noted by the *
- Congregation responses are in bold.

*No matter who you are. No matter where
you are on your spiritual journey, you are
welcome here!*

- Please stop at the welcome station for a gift.
- Please note our worship service is
livestreamed.

GATHERING MUSIC

WELCOME AND RINGING OF THE BELL

CALL TO WORSHIP

- L: Like a gentle rain,
P: God's love refreshes our lives.
- L: Like the springtime song of the birds,
P: God's grace cheers our souls.
- L: Like the delicate beauty of daffodils,
P: God's creation delights our eyes.
- L: Like the lengthening of days,
P: God's presence brings light into our worrisome darkness.
- L: Springtime announces itself,
P: And all creation shouts with joy.
- L: We are touched by messages from our loving Creator.
P: And join creation in singing praise.
- L: Christ is risen! Alleluia!
P: Christ is risen, indeed!

***HYMN**

All You Works of God, Bless the Lord!

Blue #39

*PRAYER OF CONFESSION

Merciful God, we claim to be people of the resurrection, yet we too often we do not experience resurrection power. Our prayers are often weak and our faith shallow. We compartmentalize our lives, placing you on the sidelines. We take too much for granted and fail to give thanks for the blessings of health, relationships and freedoms. We fail to be good stewards of your creation and become discouraged by problems. Gracious God, forgive our shortsightedness and our lack of trust. Help us to see that you are at work in our lives and in the world. Inspire us to hold fast to you in faith and that because of the empty tomb, we have nothing to fear. Amen.

*ASSURANCE OF FORGIVENESS

- L: Christ forgives the most impossible sins, overcomes the greatest fears, comforts the loudest cries, and breaks down the strongest barriers to his love and peace.
- P: **Through the resurrection, Christ's power in the Holy Spirit lives and works here and now.**
- L: Brothers and sisters, know that we are forgiven and be at peace. The peace of the Lord be with you all.
- P: **And also with you.**

*PASSING OF THE PEACE

(Please greet one another with signs of peace)

*GLORIA

(Sung twice)

Refrain



Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, give
thanks to the ris - en Lord. Al - le - lu - ia, al - le -
lu - ia, give praise to his Name.

Hearing the Word

SCRIPTURE LESSON

Revelation 1:4-8

PSALM 150 (Cantor will introduce; congregation, please join on refrain)

R ***Now thank we all our God, with heart and hands and voices.***

L: Praise! Praise God in the sanctuary and in the highest heavens!

P: **Praise God's powerful acts and many great deeds.**

L: Praise God with the sound of the horn, with lute and harp.

P: **Praise God with timbrels and dancing, with strings and pipes.**

L: Praise God in the clash of cymbals,

P: **With resounding cymbals.**

L: Everything that has breath, praise, O praise our God.

P: **Praise the Holy One, Hallelujah! R**

Celebrating the Meal

All Christians are welcome at the Lord's table. The bread is gluten-free. The cup is alcohol-free.
Those choosing not to commune may receive a blessing from the servers.

The Invitation to the Meal

L: We are here because Jesus has called us – strangers and friends, locals and visitors, believers and doubters, the certain and the curious. It is always a mixed company that Jesus gathers and invites to his table where, in bread and wine, he meets us and through him we, who are different, are joined to each other. So come, not because you understand, but because you are understood. Come, not because of how you feel, but because God has food for you. Come, not because you deserve a place, but because Jesus invites you, just as you are.

The Great Thanksgiving

L: The Lord be with you.

P: **And also with you.**

L: Lift up your hearts.

P: **We lift them up to the Lord.**

L: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

P: **It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

L: It is right and good always to give thanks...

The Words of Institution

L: We praise your name as we remember the mystery of faith...

All: **Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

Prayer of Consecration

Distribution of the Elements

Hymns during the distribution of the elements:

Hundreds of Ways

Fendrick and Peck

You Are Mine

Congregation join on refrain:

Refrain

Do not be a - fraid, I am with you. I have called you
each by name. Come and fol-low me, I will bring you
home; I love you and you are mine. D.C.

The musical notation is written on three staves. The first staff is in G major (one flat) and 4/4 time, with a key signature of one flat. The second staff continues the melody in the same key and time. The third staff is in D major (two sharps) and 4/4 time, with a key signature of two sharps. The lyrics are written below the notes.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

All: We give you thanks, Almighty God, that you have refreshed us at your table by granting us the presence of Jesus Christ. Strengthen our faith, increase our love for one another, and send us forth into the world in courage and peace, rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Proclaiming the Word

TIME WITH CHILDREN

Rev. Chris Myers

SONG (Children preschool through grade 8 leave for Sunday School.)

*He's got the whole world in his hands,
He's got the whole wide world in his hands,
He's got the whole world in his hands,
He's got the whole world in his hands.*

GOSPEL LESSON

John 20:19-31

SERMON

Rev. Chris Myers

***HYMN**

Alleluia, Sing to Jesus!

Blue #320

***STATEMENT OF FAITH – United Church of Canada**

L: We are not alone, we live in God's world.

P: We believe in God: who has created and is creating, who has come in Jesus, the Word made flesh, to reconcile and make new, who works in us and others by the Spirit. We trust in God. We are called to be the Church: to celebrate God's presence, to love and serve others, to seek justice and resist evil, to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen, our judge and our hope. In life, in death, in life beyond death, God is with us. We are not alone. Thanks be to God.

THE PRAYERS & LORD'S PRAYER

Lord in your mercy... Hear our prayer.

...Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

MISSION MOMENT- Diaper Drive

Rebecca Ferguson

GATHERING OUR GIFTS

This Tender Land

Fendrick and Peck

***OFFERTORY**

Jesus Shall Reign

Let ev - 'ry crea - ture rise and bring
Bless - ing and hon - or to our King,
An - gels de - scend with songs a - gain,
And earth re - peat the loud A - men.

***PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING**

Gracious God, your risen life is in us, and we delight in rejoicing in what you have done in our lives and in the world. Receive these gifts and offerings, given with joyful and grateful hearts, and use them to proclaim the good news of the risen Christ. Alleluia! Amen.

Sending

***HYMN**

For the Beauty of the Earth

Blue #40

***BLESSING**

POSTLUDE

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SUNDAY PARTICIPANTS

Preacher: Chris Myers
Celebrant: Chris Myers
Cantor: David Reilly
Liturgist: Carol Merriman
Deacons: Cindy Gandrud, Lance Lueck,
Jena Most, Paul Shepherd,
Laura Anderson
Organist: Marsha Pearson
Nursery: Kahla Fuller
Live Stream: Jeff Hoffman
Welcomers: Dennis and Lynn Linder
Trustee: JP Okal
Coffee
Fellowship: St. B's Donuts
Counters: Diane Welsh, Dennis Linder
*Altar table flowers are given by Suzanne
Hagen in memory of Margaret and Norris
Johnson.*

CHURCH STAFF

Pastor: Christopher Myers
Education Pastor: Stacy Johnson Myers
Youth Minister: Alex Plum
Music Coordinator &
Bell Director: Jamie Mills
Choir Director: Sarah Plum
Organists: Terry Mithun,
Marsha Pearson
Building Manager: Timothy Bylander
Church Moderator: Marie Roe
Office Administrator: Missy Luedtke
Nursery Attendant: Kahla Fuller
Custodian: Farnum Fuller

Treasurer's Report

	<u>Apr 13, 2025</u>	<u>Year to Date</u>
General Fund Income*	\$ 6,705	\$ 184,938
General Fund Operational Needs	\$ 10,623	\$ 159,345

A full accounting of all income and expenses is available in the church office.

*Includes annual and monthly gifts.



Offering QR Code

1. On your mobile device, open your Camera app or QR Code app
2. Point your camera at the QR Code
3. Click the tab 'Give Online'

Please remember the following in your prayers this week:

Those who are ill or recovering:

Barbara de Souza, Crissy (daughter of Brad Williams), Jim French (father of Missy Linaberry), Jeff Auchampach (nephew of Yvonne Benson), Janice Anderson (grandmother of Sara Plum), Marc Otto, Margaret (wife of Don Baumann), Judy Schierts (sister of JoAnn Lentz), Glen Corliss (brother of Raelle Jorae), Nigel (brother of Marshall Skule), Dave Mountain

Prayers for the ministry of our congregation:

- For our choir, musicians, deacons and pastors all of whom made for a wonderful Easter celebration!
- For the return of Earth Fest on Saturday, April 26th UWRF, may it kindle in each of us a deeper commitment to care for God's good creation
- For the Bonhoeffer Learning Community on Tuesday, April 29, may his faith and courage inspire us today
- For Louise Schmahl (sister of Becky Pajac) as she awaits a B+ kidney donor
- For those to be confirmed on Sunday, May 4, may they grow in faith and love

Prayers for our World:

- For all those whose small daily acts of compassion and grace slowly help change the world (and themselves)
- For those struggling to find and afford housing, may we work toward helping them, and may God's Spirit be present in those working to support them through efforts like the Simpson Shelter, Our Neighbors' Place and Habitat for Humanity
- For our nation as economic and social uncertainty takes its toll, may we do better
- For the hope of peace in Gaza, Palestine, Israel, Sudan and Ukraine, may God's Spirit be present
- For all of us as we work to better care for the gift of God's good creation and reduce the effects of climate change

Prayers of Thanksgiving:

- For our choir, deacons, welcomers, musicians and pastors who helped us to joyfully celebrate Easter this year
- For all those who cooked, served and cleaned up after the Easter breakfast, it was delicious!
- For our church families who donated home grown eggs for the Easter Breakfast, wow does it make a difference!
- For all who helped serve the Funeral reception for Brian Healy last week, you are angels
- For the flowers and buds emerging from their winter sleep, welcome spring!
- For those going to River Falls High School Prom on Saturday, April 26, may you have a ton of fun

For those grieving the loss of loved ones:

- For the family of Peg Steinmetz who died this past week and whose Memorial Service will be here at church on Fri, May 2 at 11am with visitation an hour before and a lunch to follow, may she rest in peace
- For the family of Leah Gavin, pharmacist at Freeman Pharmacy for many years, who died suddenly this past week, may our community wrap our arms around her family
- For Pope Francis as he is laid to rest, that we may learn from his legacy
- For the family of Eunice, sister of Barb Stephens who died recently, may she rest in God's strong care
- For all those who mourn, especially the families of Brian Healy, Wayne Revels, Arlyn Koecher (father of Steve), Rollie Hall (husband of Joan), may they be strengthened at this difficult time

If you have people you wish to include on our prayer list, please contact the church office or one of the pastors.

Announcements

No matter who you are. No matter where you are on your spiritual journey, you are welcome here!

Loving God

New to Church: Are you a first-time visitor? Please stop at the welcome table in the gathering area to receive a special welcome gift from us!

Sunday Morning Text Study: Please join us on Sunday mornings to discuss the Bible passages used in worship. The group meets from **9:00–9:50** Sunday mornings in the Youth Room. For more information, contact Pastor Stacy.

Adult Bible Study: The next unit will be a five-week session from April 23 to May 21, and the focus will be *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian Community* by Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Copies are available in the church office for \$14. The group meets **Wednesday afternoons, 1:00–2:30**. For more information, contact Pastor Stacy.

Loving Neighbor

Diaper Drive Returns! In honor of the parents in our lives (our own, our children who are parents, and our friends), the Mission Education Committee is again offering you the opportunity to contribute diapers to the RF Food Pantry, Our Neighbors' Place, and Turning Point. These three local organizations serve folks in dire need, folks who need diapers for their babies and infants. And diapers are expensive, no doubt. If you can add a package to your own grocery shopping, or find good sales at other stores, you'll see how expensive they can be - imagine the challenge for parents living in their cars, or on a friend's sofa, or without a job in this difficult time. Please help them if you can - and encourage your friends to help, too! (Mission Ed has also found a few other local groups to help out for some other months; would your work place, social or community groups, or extended family also be able to help?)

Relay for Life: A huge **Thank You** to everyone for your generous giving to Relay for Life whether it be through donations, luminary bags, soup night, or the silent auction items or the Relay. Our team reached the bronze level with donations over \$2,900. THANK YOU!! Overall the Relay for Life community fundraiser has received over \$87,000 and they are still collecting till August. The money raised at the event goes to American Cancer Society. Next year's Relay for Life event is set for Friday, April 10, 2026, at the River Falls High School.

Red Cross Blood Drive: The next scheduled Red Cross Blood Drive held at the church will be on **Wednesday, May 21, from 10:00 am–4:00 pm**. Please call 1-800-733-2767 or visit www.redcrossblood.org and enter: firstcongregationalrf to schedule an appointment.

Simpson Shelter Supply Needs: Underwear - men's & women's, women's socks, men's T-shirts - all sizes, men's ankle socks, men's boxer shorts - sizes M, L, personal size body wash, personal size baby oil, lip balm, women's bras. All items MUST BE NEW. There is a bin for donations.

Among Friends is a community-based social respite program serving adults who have memory loss who reside in Pierce & St. Croix Counties. For more information, call (715) 293-2561. Check out the website: amongfriendsrf.com & Facebook. It is held at church **Tuesdays & Thursdays 9am to 3pm**.

Loving Self

Merry Widows: They will meet on **Wed, May 21 at 1:00 pm at Green Mill in Hudson, WI**. All widows are welcome to join us for dinner and conversation! See JoAnn Lentz for more information.

Men's Group: Our church men's group meets **every other Tuesday from 9:00-10:00 am** in the Youth Room. All men are welcome to join us for coffee, donuts & lively conversation. Our next gatherings are **May 6 & 20**.

Women's Group: Interested in fellowship & community with other women? You are invited to join the group at noon every 2nd & 4th Tuesday. Please bring a lunch. The next meetings will be **May 13 & 27**.

Church Yoga: The church yoga group meets on **Tuesdays and Thursdays** in the church Fellowship Hall from **9:00-10:00 am** and via Zoom. Please contact the church office to receive the Zoom link.

Let's Knit/Craft Together: Join us on **Thursdays at 10:00 am. We meet at Sycamore on the first Thursday of each month & the Fellowship Hall the other Thursdays.** We have a great time sharing our projects & enjoying each other's company. For more info, contact Marie Roe at 715-781-2103 or firstroe@gmail.com

Cribbage Night: The group meets the second Monday. Players are asked to donate \$2 & the group decides which charity. Playing time is **7:00 pm**. All abilities welcome. The next game is **May 12**.

WISE Team: NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) Family Support Group meets the 2nd & 4th Thursdays 6:30pm at the River Falls Public Library & Peer Support Group meets the same evenings at Luther Memorial Church at 6:30pm. The WISE Team meets the first Tuesday of the month at 6:30 pm. For more info, call Marg Downing 715-307-5905.

Community Life

Dietrich Bonhoeffer Conversation: April 29, 6:30 pm: Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a pastor & theologian in Germany during World War II. He was also an anti-Nazi dissident who was a founding member of the Confessing Church movement, a group that resisted efforts by the government to use churches as a pro-Nazi force to gain support and legitimacy for its goals. Eighty years after his death, Dietrich Bonhoeffer's wisdom and witness continue to inspire Christians (and non-Christians) around the world, especially in times of political upheaval. Join Dr. Lori Brandt Hale to discuss the lessons from Bonhoeffer that offer guidance and hope, and challenge us to take responsibility for the coming generation. And, if you are wondering if this is a Bonhoeffer moment, Dr. Brandt Hale will explain why "is this a Bonhoeffer moment?" is the wrong question. Dessert is included. Please sign up.

Softball News: Once again our church will sponsor a softball team in the River Falls Church Family League. The family league is a co-ed division that allows players to play at the age of 14. The co-ed description requires teams to have three women on the field at all times, so ladies please don't be afraid to sign up and play. The games are played on Monday nights at Hoffman Park. Games will begin the first Monday of June and continue until the middle of August. Practices will begin the first of May. Come join in the fun and laughs. If you are interested in playing on our team, please sign up on the sheet in the gathering area or online. If you have questions, contact Deb Hoffman at (612)308-4945, debhoffman2234b@gmail.com

Holding on to Hope – Thurs, May 15, 6:30-8:00 pm: Presented by NAMI St. Croix Family Support Team in the Fellowship Hall. Join the group of family members who will share what family support can be as they discuss dealing with trauma, coping strategies, empathy and hope. Any questions, contact Marg Downing 715-307-5905.

Family Resource Center Workers: The Christian Education Committee is looking for one or two more people who are willing to work with the Family Resource Center. Tasks include: managing the book collection, shelving books, arranging display books according to season, helping children and families to be connected to the Resource Center and put it to good use. For more information or to volunteer, please contact Pastor Stacy.

Youth Events

Youth Events for Wednesday, April 30:

3:45-5:15 pm Wednesday School

4:45-9:00 pm MS Whirleyball

6:30-7:30 pm HS Class

Summer Dates for Kids: Please mark your calendars. VBS-July 28-31; Children's Musical-Aug 18-21. VBS is for children age 3 to completed grade 5. The musical is for children in kindergarten through completed grade 6.

JOIN Dr. Lori Brandt Hale, Professor of Religion
Department of Religion and Philosophy, Augsburg University, Minneapolis

for a presentation and conversation surrounding

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Tuesday, April 29th, 6:30 pm
at First Congregational UCC | 110 N. 3rd St. River Falls



Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a pastor and theologian in Germany during World War II. He was also an anti-Nazi dissident and a founding member of the Confessing Church movement, a group that resisted efforts by the government to use churches as a pro-Nazi force to gain support for its goals. Bonhoeffer was arrested, imprisoned, and ultimately executed for his association with the resistance movement. Bonhoeffer famously argued that Christians should not withdraw from the world and its challenges, but rather act within the world guided by a commitment to justice and an understanding of the necessity of divine suffering.

Register at First Congregational Church

715-425-2052

Event is FREE!



SCRIPTURE LESSON: Revelation 1:4-8

John to the seven churches that are in Asia:

Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

Look! He is coming with the clouds;

every eye will see him,
even those who pierced him;
and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail.

So it is to be. Amen.

‘I am the Alpha and the Omega’, says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

GOSPEL LESSON: John 20:19-31

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you.’ After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you.’ When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.’

But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, ‘We have seen the Lord.’ But he said to them, ‘Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.’

A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, ‘Peace be with you.’ Then he said to Thomas, ‘Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.’ Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and my God!’ Jesus said to him, ‘Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.’

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.